

## Take a Second Look: What We Miss in Strangulation Injuries

### THE NEED TO KNOW

Women who are strangled by their partners, and survive, are 800% more likely to be killed by their partners in a subsequent assault.

In 90% of strangulation cases, there is a prior history of domestic violence.

In one landmark study, only 3% of strangulation victims sought medical attention and only 15% had visible injuries.

The *absence* of petechiae may indicate a more serious assault.

The average adult handshake produces 60-100 pounds of pressure.

- It takes just 4.4 pounds of pressure to occlude the jugular veins
- It takes 11 pounds of pressure to occlude the carotid arteries
- It takes 30 pounds of pressure to occlude the trachea

All victims of strangulation should have a medical exam. The EMS exam may be the only one they receive.

Educate victims on the serious consequences of strangulation.

Encourage victims to seek follow up medical evaluation.

In 2009, the Texas Legislature passed a new law making Family Violence strangulation or suffocation a felony punishable by two to 10 years for the first offense and two to 20 years for subsequent convictions.

Texas Penal Code Section 22.01

The code states that (B)...the offense is committed by intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly impeding the normal breathing or circulation of the blood of the person by applying pressure to the person's throat or neck or by blocking the person's nose or mouth.

Strangulation calls should be considered crime scenes. Document well.

Some law enforcement agencies are automatically requesting EMS on all strangulation calls, even when the victim states they do not want EMS.